



The Wissahickon Valley Historical Society invites you to its January meeting.

Program:

The Constitution

Ratification and Amendments



presented by Russ
Bellavance

January 11, 2016
at the Wissahickon Valley Library - Blue Bell
Skippack Pike
7:30 p.m.

Condolences

We are saddened to report the passing of WVHS member Jeffery Hahn. It was always a pleasure to talk with Jeff, and he would pick up on comments and act on them. When there were plumbing issues, Jeffery would turn up with tools and fix things. When we wanted a set of cursive alphabet cards, Jeffery found a set and put it up using magnets so as not to compromise the historic wall. He was also active with Scouts and Habitat for Humanity. Our condolences to Audrey and their family.

Thank You

Thanks to Tyler and Zayne Brunner for moving the school desks from the first floor meeting room to the second floor museum. With the average age of membership rising, the help of young people is especially appreciated.

The period desks now will be the center piece of the second floor "classroom". Exhibits featuring Lower Gwynedd, Ambler, and Whitpain are being moved to the first floor museum. Thanks to our Thursday crew for moving exhibits and setting them up. The WVHS January and February meetings will be held at the Wissahickon Valley library on Skippack Pike. Watch for a grand re-opening of the 1895 Schoolhouse in March. Of course, help is always appreciated on Thursday morning from 10 to 12.

Going, Going, Gone

Driving around the area these days, one is aware of many changes. Unfortunately many involve losses of buildings. The following acknowledge a couple of these losses.

In Center Square a number of buildings were demolished in December in preparation for an expansion of the shopping area. One of the buildings was the first home of Whitpain library. The following is an excerpt from *Whitpain Township - A Tricentennial Reflection - 1701-2001* (compiled and edited by Wayne A, Huss) which reviews the history of this building and its connection with the library.

"In 1966, the Women's Club of Whitpain approached the Ambler Public Library, the Montgomery County Library and the Norristown Public Library about establishing a library in Whitpain. The Library of



Whitpain opened in two rent free rooms above a beauty parlor on January 18, 1967. It was located on the corner of Routes 202 and 73, now known as the Village of Center Square.

The Wissahickon School District had been supporting the Ambler Public Library for years, and in 1968 it started supporting the Library of Whitpain as well. The school district offered the Library of Whitpain a room on the second floor of the 1895 School Building at the corner of Skippack Pike and School Road in Blue Bell (the WVHS headquarters today.) The library happily moved into the larger quarters.

In 1969, the Wissahickon School District suggested merging the two libraries (Ambler and Whitpain). The Montgomery County-Norristown Public Library (now merged) agreed to the plan. To support the library, the Wissahickon School Board levied a one-mill library tax in 1970, and the system was named the Wissahickon Valley Public Library.

In 1981, the Whitpain Branch moved into two classrooms in Shady Grove Elementary School. Then in 1987, it moved back to the original building in Center Square where it now had both the first and second floors." Thanks to lots of public support and work, the library now has its own comfortable building.

Several houses along 202/DeKalb Pike as well as businesses along Skippack are gone or going as well. Bob Whittock has been taking photos of buildings scheduled for demolition.

Ambler lost a landmark in December too. McDonald was closed and the building leveled.

Next month we will cover a house in Lower Gwynedd that is being carefully renovated.

Recent Donations

Frank Scardino, Jr. recently added several items to our AmChem and West Ambler collections. At right is a portion of a large photo labeled "6th Annual Banquet - Italian Citizens Bocce Club - December 14, 1941 - Little Ritz Cafe - Center Square, PA". Frank explained that there were several bocce courts in Ambler. One was next to the Sons of Italy hall on Butler Pike.

The donation also included a copy of James H. Gravell's will dated April 17, 1917. Mr. Gravell started AmChem and was famous for his generosity towards his employees. Several aerial photos of the AmChem campus were donated as well. Thank you, Frank.



Bob Whittock cleaned and preserved the farm tool at left. It was donated by Kenneth Snowden and his father Mike Snowden after it was found at Mike's property on Cathcart Rd. We guess that it would have had a long wooden handle and would have been used for cleaning stalls in a barn. The tool is 6 1/2" across and the tines are 6" long. If anyone has more information, the tool will be on display at the January meeting and then at the schoolhouse. Thanks to Bob, Kenneth, and Mike. This is a reminder of our local agricultural past.

Kevin McLemore grew up on Susquehanna Road near Ambler. As a young man he would explore the woods near his home and collect artifacts. This collection included numerous bottles. He recently donated the collection to the WVHS. Emmy Simon has been researching how to clean and identify bottles and we will accessioning them into our museum. Several bottles have local connection: from Stillwagon's Drug Store (9 Main Street), Joseph S. Angeny's Apothecary (Butler and Main St.), and a Bromo Caffeine from Keasbey and Mattison.

We will have more to share on this donation and its story as we process more of the items. Thanks, Kevin.





Happy 2016 and thanks to Dot MacDermott for decorating the 1895 Schoolhouse for the holidays.

Info on Blue Bell Elem. School Sought

Parents at Blue Bell Elementary are assembling a display about the school's history. Please consider sharing any stories and/or artifacts you might have of experiences at Blue Bell.

Newsletter Articles Requested

If you have an expertise, hobby, or favorite historic sites, this newsletter is always looking for content. Please call Peg at 215-542-7753 with suggestions and questions.

Mark Your Calendar

January 9 - Saturday, 11 to 3 - Pottsgrove Manor "Distaff Day" a spinning demonstration. 610-326-4014

January 10 - Sunday, 2:30 to 4 - Hot Chocolate and Conversation with a Cop - Sweet Briar Cafe, 11 Lindenwold, Ambler

January 11 - Monday, 7:30 - WVHS monthly meeting at the Wissahickon Valley Public Library in Blue Bell. Program: The Constitution - Part 2, Ratification and Amendments.

January 14 - Thursday, 7:30 - Women's Club of Whitpain - Program: Abraham Lincoln Visits Philadelphia at Whitpain Township Building, Community Room

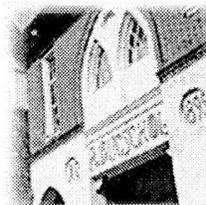
January 17 - Sunday, 1 to 4 p.m. - Open House at the 1895 Schoolhouse

January 23 - Saturday, 10 to 3 - Wentz Farmstead "Winter Chores" part of the Laerenswaert Series. 610-584-5104

January 25 - Monday - WVHS board meeting, 7:30 p.m.

February 3 - Wednesday - Wentz Farmstead "Scherenschnitte" program for children. pre-registration required 610-584-5104

February 8 - Monday, 7:30 - WVHS monthly meeting - shared program with Wissahickon Valley Public Library - at the Library. Program: Medicine in Ancient Egypt presented by Dr. Stephen R. Phillips, University of Penn. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



Wissahickon Valley Historical Society
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